

Barbour Flax Spinning Company
Grand and Morris Streets
Paterson, New Jersey
Passaic County

HAER No. NJ-11

HAER
NJ,
16-PAT,
7-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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16-PAT,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

BARBOUR FLAX SPINNING COMPANY

NJ-11

Date: 1860, 1865-80.

Location: Grand and Morris Streets
Paterson, New Jersey
Passaic County

Designed by: Unknown.

Owner: Linen Thread Company

Significance: The Barbour Flax Spinning Company was one of the largest linen works in the country in the second half of the nineteenth century, employing some 440 people to process over a million and a half pounds of flax annually. Most of the existing building stock dates from the 1860s and the 1870's, although the original building (destroyed by fire in 1860) dated from about 1838.

BARBOUR FLAX SPINNING MILL LOTS

The following is the result of a deed search done at the time of the survey. In order to simplify a complex parcel, the lot has been broken down into 10 separate parcels, and assigned numbers as per the accompanying map. Once Barbour has acquired all the parcels, it will be handled as a single unit, consolidated under the Barbour Flax banner.

Barbour Lot #1 (Passaic Mill Lot #2)

"Beginning on the west side of Spruce Street at the southwest corner of lots heretofore leased to Henry V. Butler and running thence southerly along the line of said street one hundred feet thence westerly at right angles to Spruce Street 238 feet more or less to the base of the embankment of the middle canal in the rear of said lot thence northerly along the base of said embankment 111 feet more or less to the southwest corner of lot #7 leased to Henry V. Butler, thence easterly along Butler's line 190' more or less to the place of beginning."
(Passaic Deeds Q 202)

Barbour Lot #2

"Beginning on the west line of Spruce Street at the southeast corner of ...a lot...deeded to John Colt...and running from thence (1) westerly along the south line of said mill lot 238' (2) thence southeasterly along the east line of the land of Dolphin Mfg. Co., about 8' thence (3) easterly parallel to the first line 238' to the west side of Spruce Street and thence northerly along the line of Spruce Street about 7; to the place of beginning." (Passaic Deeds, G-6, p. 597)

Barbour Lot #3

"Beginning on the west line of Spruce Street at the southeast corner of Passaic Mill Lot #2...thence (1) westerly along the line of Passaic Mill number two and the line of Oliver St. extended about 250' to the line of the mill lot of the Dolphin Mfg. Co. thence (3) easterly along said line of said mill lot and the south line of so called Oliver Street extended about 30 feet to Spruce Street thence northerly along Spruce Street..about 34' to...the place of beginning, excepting however what is referred to here as Barbour lot #2."
(Passaic Deeds, G-6, 597)

Barbour Lot #4

"Beginning on the west side of Spruce Street at the southeast corner of Mill Lot owned or occupied by the American Hemp Co., thence running westerly along the south line of said lot 100; thence southerly at right angles 100' to the north side of Oliver St. extended 50' wide, thence easterly and parallel to the first line 100' along the north line of said Street to west side of Spruce Street thence northerly along said Spruce St. 100' to the place of beginning."
(Passaic Deeds, O-369)

Barbour Lot #5

"Beginning in the north line of Oliver Street at the southeast corner of lots conveyed to Thomas Barbour by deed of said society dated Oct. 29, 1865 and running thence (1) northerly along the east line of said lots 100' (2) thence easterly parallel with Oliver St. about 30' (3) thence southerly parallel with first course 100' to Oliver St. and (4) thence westerly along Oliver St. about 30' to the place of beginning."

Passaic Deeds (S-3, p. 58)

Barbour Lot #6

"Beginning in the northerly line of Oliver St. at the distance of 238 $\frac{4}{10}$ feet westerly from Spruce Street and thence the southwest corner of a lot of land heretofore sold to said Thomas Barbour and running from there (1) westerly on a line with the northerly line of Oliver St. 120' (2) northerly parallel with Spruce St. 100' (3) easterly parallel with the first line 125' to the lot of said Barbour above mentioned and (4) southerly along the same 100 feet to the place of beginning."

(Passaic Deeds, D-3, 163.)

Barbour Lot #7

"Beginning in the northerly line of Oliver St. west of Spruce Street and running from there (1) westerly in a line with the northerly line of Oliver Street 100' (2) northerly parallel with Spruce St. 100' (3) easterly parallel with the first line 100' and (4) southerly parallel with the 2nd line 100 feet to the place of beginning."

(Passaic Deeds, O-3, 163)

Barbour Lot #8

Beginning in the north line of Barbour Street...and from thence (1) westerly along the north line of Barbour St. 187', (2) thence northerly parallel with Spruce St. 100', (3) thence easterly parallel with Barbour St. 187' to west line of land deeded Barbour as above Stated, (4) southerly parallel with Spruce St. and along the westerly line of the lots 100' to Barbour St. and the place of beginning."

(Passaic Deeds, L6-345)

Barbour Lot #9

"Beginning in the north line of Barbour St. at the southwest corner of lot deeded The Barbour Flax Spinning Co. by said Society by deed dated 22 of January, 1873, and running thence (1) westerly along Barbour St. 151' to the east line of a street indicated as Hull St. thence (2) northerly along said street about 100' to the Dolphin Manufacturing Co. line westerly, thence, (3) easterly along said line 151' to the west line of said Barbour Flax Spinning Co., and thence, (4) southerly along the line of said lot about 100' to Barbour Street and the Place of Beginning."

(Passaic Deeds, L-6, 343)

Barbour Lot #10

"....(1) easterly along the north line of the Dolphin Mfg. Co. 117', (2) thence northerly along the west bank of the upper raceway 118' feet to Stoney Road as traveled, and (3) thence southwesterly along the southeasterly line of said Stoney Road as travelled 182' to the Dolphin Mfg. line and the point of beginning." (Passaic Deeds, L-6, p. 245)

The first Barbour parcel occupied was Lot #1 which was sold by the SUM to John Colt in May of 1851.¹ The purchase price of \$52,000 included the right to draw two square feet of water from the Society's upper canal. Trumbull reports that the first building on this lot was a cotton mill built by the SUM in 1838, and thence leased to Colt's Paterson Manufacturing Company,² but there is no record of this transaction. A map of the city drawn in 1840 reveals two buildings located approximately on this site, labelled the "Maitland Cotton Mills",³ but whether they belonged to John Colt's property can only be speculated. In the meanwhile, the SUM sold Lot #4 to Robert Taylor, one of the backers of the neighboring of the American Hemp Co. (later Dolphin Jute Company), in 1850.⁴ Barbour Lots #1 and #4 were among the last lots fronting on Spruce Street sold by the society.

The Spruce Street mill was the Paterson Manufacturing Company's third factory, with their previous operations in the Essex Mill and Passaic Mill #1. Titled Passaic Mill #2, the Spruce Street mill was used to produce sheetings, but later switched to the spinning of yarns.⁵ With the success of the Paterson Manufacturing Company, the rear Lot #1 between the former western boundary of the lot and the embankment of the middle canal, was purchased by the company in 1852 from the SUM,⁶ and an addition extending almost to the canal was added to the original mill.⁷

In February of 1859, Passaic Mill #2 was ordered to be sold by the state chancery to satisfy creditors of the company.⁸ Charles Borrowe purchased it for \$20,732, and sold it the next month to E. Boudinot Colt, John Colt's son, for \$50,000.⁹ E.B. Colt was leading the reorganization of the bankrupt company, and sought to retain the mill and the accompanying rights to 288" of water, and the inventory of the cotton Mill:

"...104 power looms, with reed harnesses and shuttles complete in Passaic Mill number two, the mill within described; 4 dressing frames and held bearing frames with spares beams and apparatus completed, 14 throstles frames complete containing 2848 spindles, 6 danforth filling frames, containing 654 spindles, 1 ring traveler frame, containing 132 spindles, one danforth warp frame containing 1020 spindles, 2 spindles winding frames, 24 36" carding machines with four railroad leads, four drawing frame, 8 speeders, 3 grinding frames, 3 pickers, one willow machine, etc."¹⁰

In July, 1860, E.B. Colt sold the mill to the newly formed Passaic Manufacturing Company,¹¹ corporate descendant of his father's Paterson Manufacturing Company.

Thomas Barbour, sent by his family from Ireland to establish an American branch of the family's prosperous linen thread company, bought Passaic Mill #2 from the Passaic Manufacturing Company in 1864 for \$60,000.¹² He simultaneously acquired the rights to the two square feet of water deeded to the lot and in 1865, leased an additional 288" from SUM. Rechristened the "Belfast Mill", the building was reoutfitted for the production of linen thread and yarn. Bishop describes the plant in 1868;

"Their principal mill is now a stone structure, one hundred by forty feet, five stories in height, of which the first three stories are used for preparing and spinning the flax, which is imported. The product ascends until ready for market on the top floor. All shoe thread papered and packed and machine thread spooled and labelled in a three story wooden building. Here is also a printing office for labels."¹³

Completing the complex was a dye house, 100x30; and a brick building 100x20 for offices. Power for the linen works was supplied by a water from the upper canal, and by 1870, 120 horsepower was being derived from a 54" turbine wheel. That year, 40 men, 200 women, and 200 children tended Barbour spindles, processing 1,508,000 lbs. of Irish flax into 792,000 lbs. of shoe thread, 93,600 lbs. of machine thread, 150,000 lbs. of tailor's thread, and 20,000 lbs. of linen twines, with a combined value of \$662,000.¹⁴

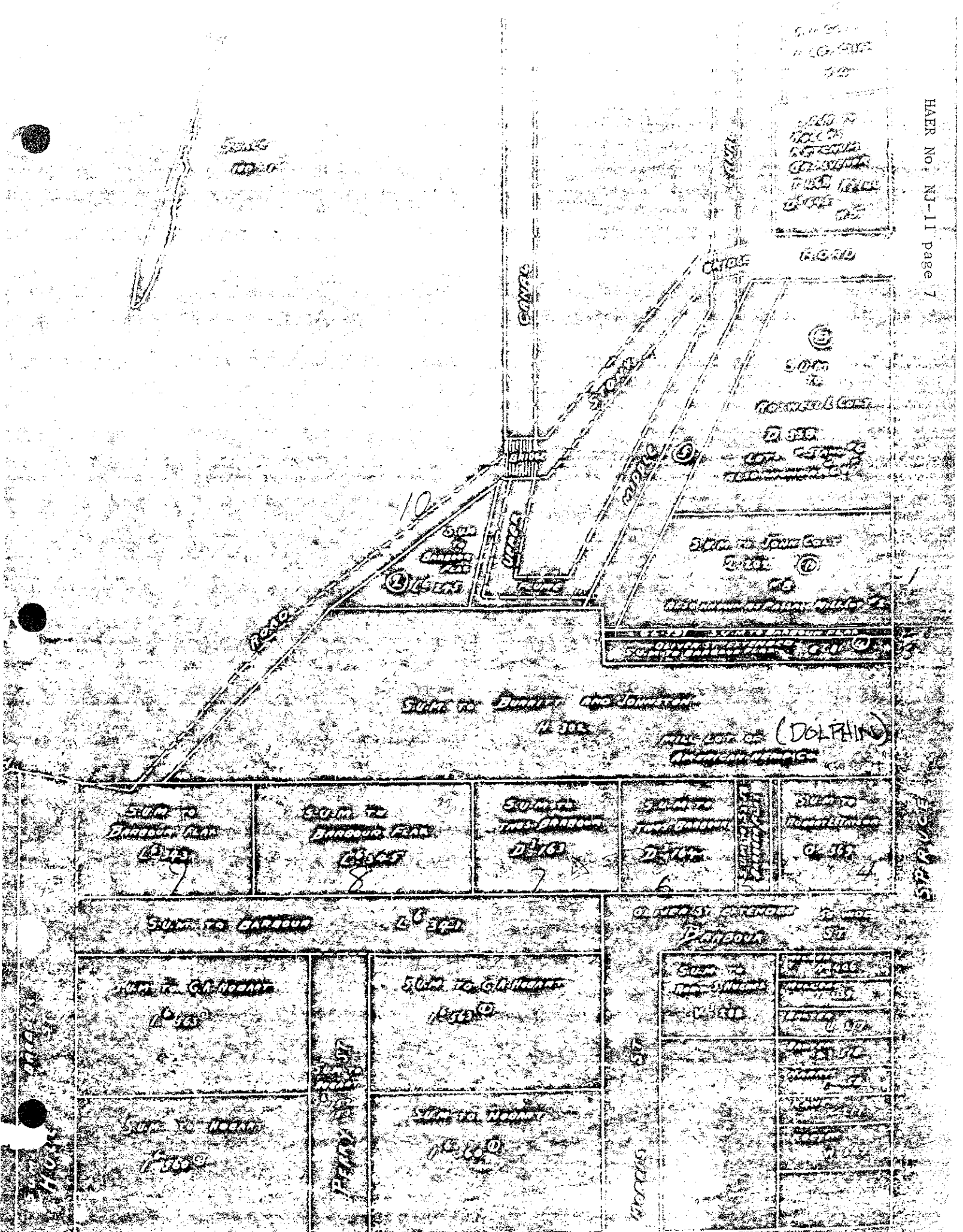
Increasing demands, and rising production dictated expansion for the mill, and between 1865 and 1880, Barbour continued to procure vacant lots in the vicinity of the original Belfast mill. He bought lots 6 and 7 from the Society in October 1865,¹⁵ and lot number five within the next year.¹⁶ All these lots and Passaic Mill #2, were transferred from Thomas Barbour to the Barbour Flax Spinning Company in 1868.¹⁷ In 1877, he bought lot number 4 from the Ivanhoe Manufacturing Co., who had acquired it from H.V. Butler, who had bought from Robert Taylor in 1858.¹⁸ The same year Barbour Flax built a large new factory on Grand Street.

Two years later the Barbour Company's first factory in Paterson was destroyed by a fire which had begun in the Rogers erecting shop, which was also on the upper raceway. Rebuilt immediately, the new "Lisburn Mill" featured a pair of towers at the corners of its Spruce Street facade. Four stories high, measuring 50x180, the new mill was powered by both steam and water.¹⁹ The Paterson Daily Press reported in 1880 that the new mill was powered by a 1,000 hp. steam engine, and claimed it to be the largest mill in the U.S. for hemp twine.²⁰ Both statements are questionable.

To accomodate their new facility the Barbour Flax Company bought Lot #2 in 1879,²¹ Lots 8, 9, and 10 in 1880²² and Lot number 3 in 1882, all from the SUM. The Barbour Company continued to occupy the upper tier lots until 1934, when it sold out to the Linen Thread company.²³

FOOTNOTES: The Barbour Flax Spinning Co.

1. Passaic Deeds, Q 202.
2. Trumbull, p. 59.
3. WPA copy of a Van Wagoner Map of 1840.
4. O-369.
5. Trumbull, p. 59.
6. Misc. A, p. 319.
7. Map of 1870.
8. E-2, 621.
9. F-2, 23.
10. F-2, 23.
11. H-2, 350.
12. V-2, 12-13.
13. Bishop, History of American Manufactures, 1868.
14. NJ Census, 1870.
15. D-3, 163.
16. S-3, 58.
17. P-3, 351-57.
18. V-5, 502.
19. Turnbull, 277.
20. Paterson Daily Press, Dec. 24, 1880.
21. G-6, 597.
22. L-6, 343.
23. G-6, 597.



Sum to Battery and Lioness 4.10	Sum to Cannon 4.30	Sum to Lioness 4.10	Sum to Cannon 4.10	Sum to Cannon 4.10	Sum to Cannon 4.10
9	8	7	6	5	4

Sum to Cannon 4.30

Sum to Cannon 4.30	Sum to Cannon 4.30	Sum to Cannon 4.30	Sum to Cannon 4.30
10	9	8	7